

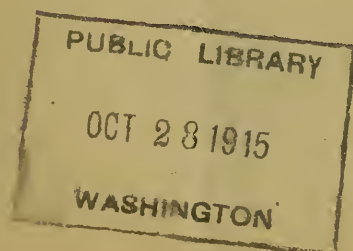
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Sidelights on Mexico

By AN AMERICAN



Some Facts Never Before Printed

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"Every man has a right to his chance in life. Nobody knows what he will do with it until the trial has been made. The constitutionalists propose to give every man his chance."

—General Lucio Blanco.

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The writer of this pamphlet has no investments in Mexico, and no motive except to place before any who are sufficiently interested to read it, some facts which are usually overlooked, and leave the decision to the innate sense of justice which abides in most men. Neither party in Mexico has any knowledge of, or responsibility for its publication.

This trouble was started in the United States, and it is an open secret that much of the money to keep it going was supplied from the same source. It does not take long to decide that American capitalists do not buy arms and ammunition for a foreign people without having some definite object in view, and it does not take the American common people long to find out what that object is. Nine out of every ten have formed conclusions which, differing in non-essential details, in the main are very nearly the truth.

Mexico has suffered enough at our hands. All she asks now is to be let alone. She makes no protest at the non-intervention policy, and any inconvenience which she may suffer by reason of the exclusion of arms and ammunition from this side of the river will be more than compensated if the embargo can be extended so as to exclude all forms of activity in Mexican affairs.

This pamphlet is intended for free distribution, and copies will be sent on request where stamps are enclosed to cover cost of mailing.

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Sidelights on Mexico

We Americans like to be shocked. For years we have derived our most delightful thrills of horror, as well as our most soothing sensations of superiority, from contemplation of Mexico. During the "piping times of peace" managers of the bull-rings at Juarez and Matamoras admitted that but for the patronage of Americans seeking to be shocked they would have been compelled to go out of business, whereas, they were able occasionally to import Bengal tigers to vary the sport, with a gratifying increase in gate receipts. Incidentally, they were also able, by this means, to confirm the orthodox opinion of the "barbarous" Mexican.

In the main, there is no objection to these little spasms of indignant virtue; it is merely a way we have, and is so well understood that nobody pays any attention to it now, unless it passes the limits of mere self-congratulation and threatens to work harm to some one else. It passed that limit in the case of Mexico some time ago.

During the past three years the favorite space-filler with American newspapers and periodicals has been so-called revelations of horrors supposed to exist in Mexico. It begun with a rather notorious arraignment of the Mexican government in a monthly magazine, and has continued intermittently ever since.

Protests were made by Americans and other foreign residents in Mexico against the manifest injustice which was being perpetrated, these publications being no more the truth about Mexico than a history of child labor, white slave traffic, and political graft would be the truth about the United States. Attention was called to the fact that Mexico was conscious of these evils and endeavoring to correct them as rapidly as the conditions of the country would allow, and that such a course was calculated not only to arouse opposition to the government and make its work more difficult, but might bring about an uprising which would sweep away all the good that had been done.

These protests were unheeded. The publications against the Mexican government continued. Then some people began to ask, "Why? Why this persistent attack on a friendly nation? If we must indulge in the diversion of plucking motes from our brother's eye, why confine our activities to Mexico? Why not Patagonia, or Afghanistan, or Rajpootana?"

When the worst fears of the cautious ones were finally justified our first attitude was one of amused tolerance. "Let them alone," we said. "A little blood-letting will do them no harm. We'll stop them when the right time comes."

That time has arrived. In a firm and dignified manner we have announced that it must stop. They have had their little revolution—which, according to our ideas, they must have once in so often; they have sufficiently entertained themselves and the world at large; now peace must be restored in Mexico, and we have undertaken to do it.

We are grieved that our well-meant overtures are not cordially received, and surprised to find both contending parties in Mexico insisting on their right and ability to settle their differences without outside interference.

But this has not disturbed our serene faith in our right to make the demand and our ability ultimately to enforce it. By the simple expedient of blockading one party financially, and locking the doors of international commerce on the other, we may wait with equanimity for the result. We have virtually walled up a nation with the entire population in arms, with their passions inflamed to the highest pitch, and have made it impossible for them to secure the only means of settling their differences or protecting the foreigners who are still among them. Some outrages will inevitably be perpetrated which will cause other nations to demand the protection of foreigners by the United States, and we shall then be able to send armed troops across the border with the consent of the world. The rest will be easy. Verily, it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good!

The constitution of the United States of America provides that its law-making bodies shall be composed only of American citizens of given age, and residence in the country. The right and privilege of a voice in deciding national issues, even to the extent of an individual vote, may be obtained only after residence within our borders for a stipulated length of time.

The same provisions are made in the constitution of the United Mexican States. The grounds on which we demand that Mexico make an exception in our favor at this critical period have not yet been stated. On the face of it, only two reasons appear to be possible; one is, our superiority in the art of government, and the other is our good intentions toward the nation. A careful and impartial review of the facts in the case may enable us to determine the extent to which our demands are justified on either one of these counts.

The history of Mexico is the exact opposite of that of the United States. Colonists came to this country from Europe to build up, but in Mexico they came to tear down. During the centuries while our government was in course of construction Mexico was being raked and harried by other nations intent only on plunder. Her civilization was obliterated, her temples and palaces laid waste, her princes slain, and revolution and chaos inaugurated.

During the three hundred years of Spanish dominion there existed no administrative policy looking to the welfare of the people or the future of the nation. There was but one object, namely, to pay into the royal treasury the largest revenue possible. The ambition of each succeeding governor was to surpass the last, and his tenure in office usually depended on his success. The only way to accomplish this was by the complete enslavement of the people. Mexico had flourishing industries at that time, but her factories were destroyed, her vineyards and olive groves obliterated, home production was forbidden and commerce with foreign nations was punishable with death.

More than three centuries ago the great serpent-skin drum on the temple of the war-god sent its last notes of doom across the valley, ushering in Mexico's long "Noches Triste." Two hundred years later the first ray of light crossed her horizon, when the parish priest of Dolores, Don Miguel Hidalgo, summoned his people around him in the early dawn of that memorable 16th of September and proclaimed the independence of Mexico. One hundred years ago the first Mexican congress assembled and declared the independence of the nation, freedom of slaves, and adopted a provisional constitution.

But the adoption of a constitution did not insure peace and prosperity. Up to 1884 revolution and unrest prevailed, making material advancement difficult. In sixty-three years Mexico had five presidents, two emperors and one regency, enjoying the unusual variety of four presidents in three months.

From this it will be seen that the actual period during which Mexico may be said to have existed as a peaceful republic is comprised in twenty-six years, from 1884 to 1910. She entered upon it without agriculture, without commerce, without manufactures, with a debt of over two billion dollars, and with a population of homeless, impoverished, ignorant, hopeless people.

Instead of taxing the people to maintain an expensive army and navy, the attention of the government was directed to the promotion of internal growth. All its energies and resources were conserved and utilized for increasing home production, in order to cheapen the cost of living and provide a surplus for export. The bandits who hitherto had made the name of Mexico a terror were converted into the Rurales, and made to serve the country in maintaining law and order. Schools, reformatories and hospitals were built, public utilities provided, and a system of free instruction installed.

In 1895, instead of a deficit in Mexico's budget, there was a substantial sum in the credit column, and from that date to 1910 she was one of the few nations whose receipts grew steadily in excess of her expenditures. Mexico's annual report of 1909-10 showed a foreign trade of \$227,451,908; 11,585 miles of railroad constructed since 1884, and, in addition to many institutions of higher education, twelve thousand primary schools in which one million pupils were receiving free instruction.

Incidentally, certain Mexican states had experimented successfully with some economic problems of value to civilization. Over against Mexico's much advertised prison horrors was one little-known state prison which might have served as a model for the world. It was operated on the theory that the object of punishment is the reformation of the criminal, and all of its activities were directed toward that end. The inmate of this institution entered on a course of training, mental, moral and physical, under the best masters who could be provided. Regardless of age, half of each day was spent in school, and the remainder working at a trade. The output of prison labor was marketed to the best advantage, and a certain per cent of the proceeds

deposited at interest and paid to the prisoner on his liberation, or to his family during the term of his incarceration if he happened to be a married man. At the expiration of his sentence he was not left at large to return to his old manner of life, but was placed in a position which had been secured for him and for which he had been trained in the prison.

In 1910 Mexico had one city of 60,000 inhabitants which held the record for the smallest police force, the lightest criminal docket, and the least drunkenness of any city of its size in the world. It had solved the problem of temperance and good government by the simple process of making the saloon-keepers the custodians of the public peace. Each saloon-keeper was policeman ex-officio, in a certain district adjacent to his cantina, and a drunk, plain or fancy, occurring within his jurisdiction automatically voided his license.

If we can show a better record during any equal period under approximately similar conditions we will have demonstrated our right to demand that Mexico defer to us in matters of government.

Hark! Did some one ask, "Why, then, this revolution?" Turn back to the beginning and read more attentively.

No one claims that Mexico had a perfect system or an unimpeachable administration. What might have been done to correct it by peaceable means will never be known. It required the stern virtues of a man like General Porfirio Diaz to lay the foundations and begin the work. He was as truly the man of the hour in Mexico as was Washington in the United States. His methods may have been despotic, but it required despotism to protect the weak, not only from the strong but from themselves. He may have been cruel, but it was the cruelty of the surgeon who must sacrifice some members that others be maintained in health. He dared the censure of the world and the hate of his own people, and carried his life in his hands with a serenity possible only to one who cherishes a purpose dearer than life. But General Diaz was growing old. A new generation had arisen in Mexico, a generation which through the means provided by him had passed him in enlightenment and progress. It was the old, familiar fireside story written into the history of a nation; the father outgrown by his sons, and, ignorant of their arrival at man's estate, still striving to enforce his authority. But he stood the test, and gave the supreme tribute

which age renders to youth, when he consented to retire to oblivion in the vain hope that his people might have peace.

The component parts of a nation are the country, the people, and the laws. The greatness of a nation, therefore, is based on the extent of its resources, the strength of its people, and the wisdom of its laws. A little more than three-score years ago Mexico was, on the first of these counts, the greatest nation on the North American continent; and but for the intervention of a greater on the second, a different history had been written in the western hemisphere. The domain of Mexico included all of the present republic and the states of California, Utah, Nevada, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and part of Colorado. The acquisition of that territory by the United States marked the turning point in the history of both nations. It was the first step in our policy of expansion, without which the second, nor the third, nor any subsequent step, had been possible.

Various attempts have been made to justify the methods by which it was acquired, but the best that the most biased American has been able to offer is "manifest destiny;" the manifest destiny of the strong to supplant the weak. It was manifest destiny which enabled the early settlers in the United States to buy the land of the Indians for glass beads and hand-mirrors, and when the desire of the aborigines for beads and hand-mirrors failed, impelled the aforesaid settlers to exterminate the owners of the land. It was manifest destiny operating in Mexico during the Diaz regime, in the transportation of Yaqui Indians to the hennequin fields of Yucatan in order to open their lands for colonization. There were no cotton fields in the United States at the beginning of our occupancy, otherwise there might have been a precedent for Mexico's policy. The Yankee is a thrifty soul, and he naturally hates to see anything go to waste.

Mexico was less prepared for war at that time than the United States would have been in 1866. She was in the midst of revolution and internal strife, there were no supplies for the army, no money in the treasury, and no credit abroad. There was absolutely nothing left but the country, a devastated and impoverished country, nevertheless their own, and they were prepared to defend it as long as a charge of powder remained.

It was not warfare; it was Manifest Destiny behind the pol-

ished barrels of a thousand guns ordering Mexico to "stand and deliver!" So did Manifest Destiny bestow on us more than two-fifths of the territory of this defenseless and unhappy nation, and so has she continued her favors toward us ever since, adding to our possessions and enlarging our borders, down to that last and most valued gift of all, the Panama Canal. Already some other nations are anxiously inquiring whither this is tending. Let the South American republics beware! It may be easier to stay the progress of Manifest Destiny at the Rio Grande than at the Panama Canal!

But we paid for the land. We insist on due credit for that. We had as well taken it without paying in so far as Mexico had the ability to prevent. We paid fifteen millions for a territory which is today worth many billions.

"But it is worth this because Americans have made it so," some will urge. Not entirely. Largely it is what Mexicans have made it. It was Mexicans who laid railroad tracks and strung telegraph wires, Mexicans who constructed storage dams and irrigation canals. The thing that drew capital to the Southwest and made its rapid development one of the wonders of the century was cheap Mexican labor. He is popularly dominated a liar and a thief and an all-around undesirable citizen. Nevertheless the Mexican is the real maker of the great Southwest.

Our principal grievance against Mexico appears to be her failure to adequately protect Americans who went to that country voluntarily for the purpose of enriching themselves through the exceptional opportunities there afforded. How fared it with the Mexicans, who, through no will of their own, became subject in person and property to the United States, and who brought their wealth with them?

Most of the land in our newly-acquired possessions was contained in large tracts known as Spanish Grants, then intact and in the possession of the direct heirs of the original grantees. They were the richest people in the country; now they are the poorest. The records show comparatively few instances where they sold the land. How did it happen?

They were told that the United States guaranteed the titles to them and their heirs forever. That was sufficient; and they still point to that "forever" with wonder and perplexity. No one advised them of the liberal limitation laws whereby the wise and wary might obtain the property of the ignorant and unsus-

picious. In most instances the granting of patents is discretionary with the local commissioner. In distributing favors he is not hampered by any restrictions requiring proof of the rights of the patentee, or the necessity of notifying the owner of record, by publication or otherwise, to protect his rights. The fortunate individual who secures a patent, maintains discreet silence, and complies with the law for a short term of years has a good and incontestible title to the land. If the owner of record discovers it in time, if he has enough money to secure a lawyer who is willing to represent him against an individual influential enough to secure the patent in the first place, he may recover his land. "Quien sabe?"

In some instances where the American speculator did not have time to wait for slower processes, or lacked the "pull" necessary to get a patent from the state, it was found comparatively easy and equally effective to get the Mexican's signature to an alleged lease, which by the skillful insertion of a clause or two was of the legal effect of a quit-claim deed. When the period of the lease expired and the owner attempted to reclaim his land he found the other party securely entrenched in his limitation title.

It is not an easy task to maintain the faith of the relatives and descendants of these people in a government which will guarantee them in the enjoyment of their property forever, and at the same time sanction laws which enable others to deprive them of it without consent, without payment and without notice. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that they were not heirs to that meekness of spirit which centuries of oppression engenders, suppose they were like free-born American citizens, wise to their rights and strong to assert them, as is the case with Americans now demanding indemnity from Mexico? Suppose that all the legitimate heirs to lands, the title of which was guaranteed by the United States in the treaty of 1848, should line up and demand that those guarantees be made good? Suppose they should offer for our enlightenment, and for the enlightenment of the world, evidence of the multifarious methods which have been used in alienating the property from them? Ye gods! Just suppose!

This writer has watched a row of Mexicans, on Saturday night, file through an office building in a modern city of the great Southwest, each with a crumpled bit of paper in one hand and

some money in the other. They paused in turn before a dapper little clerk, who dropped the money in the till, wrote something on the paper and handed it back. These men worked all week grading streets and digging ditches, and Saturday night came in to pay the installment on their little home in the suburbs. They were the grandsons and great-grandsons of the original owners of that county. Neither they nor their ancestors had ever sold; nevertheless, they were buying half an acre on the installment plan and paying \$2.00 a week.

Scattered through the Southwest are many fertile irrigated valleys. Beyond these valleys on the line which divides "the desert from the sown" are scattered "jacals," inhabited by old Mexicans, who look up with wondering, almost sightless eyes as the big automobiles of the new ranch owners go honking by. Thirty years ago all of these lands belonged to their fathers, who were rich dons, with fertile fields and many cattle. Neither they nor their fathers ever sold an acre, but it is all gone. Their haciendas are supplanted by modern ranch houses, and the crude ditches that carried water to their fields of frijolies and chili have made way for wide irrigation canals. They have nothing left but the miserable "jacal" and bit of adobe-enclosed garden, but nothing grows in the garden, for it takes many pesos to get water out of the big ditches of the rich Americanos. But they do not starve. Oh, no! Down there with backs bent between the onion rows, or with hoe in hand on the canal bank are the legitimate heirs to the land. They work cheaply, so there is always corn for tortillos and goat meat on Sundays!

Survival of the fittest? Manifest destiny? Perhaps. But we have been talking about mutual confidence and the brotherhood of humanity.

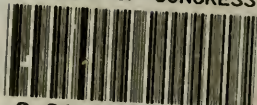
It is not the province of this article to deal with the comparative merits and strength of the two contending parties in México. All that it is possible for any one to know, outside of the immediate governing circles, is well known to every intelligent American. The federalists are in possession of the capital city with what is referred to as "the machinery of government," whatever that may mean. They also control an indefinite area of adjacent country.

The constitutionalist party under the leadership of General Carranza is in control of an equally indefinite area. It is composed mostly of the younger generation of Mexicans, and has an-

nounced itself as standing for the principles propagated by Francisco I. Madero, its first leader. Its principal tenets of faith are: Free constitutional government, impartial elections by the people, a division of the lands among actual settlers, and distribution of natural resources for the benefit of the people. In the state of Tamaulipas this division of land among settlers has already been inaugurated. Replying to the oft-repeated argument that in a short time a few men will have it all and the many be where they were before, General Lucio Blanco said: "Every man has a right to his chance in life. , Nobody knows what he will do with it until the trial has been made. The constitutionalists propose to give every man his chance."

Recent trade reports published in New York show the State of Tamaulipas, where General Blanco is working out his theories, to be in better condition, notwithstanding the revolution, than it has been in many years.

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